

I am pleased to present the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's first-ever **Utah Report on the Environment 2006**. This report provides opportunity for discussion on the condition of Utah's environment that could guide our environmental decisionmaking. In compiling this report, the **Department of Environmental Quality** (DEQ) takes a look at environmental conditions over the past few decades that contributed to where we are at today. These include both successes and challenges ahead.

Clean air, clean land and clean water are valuable resources essential to Utah's quality of life and economy. Our **mission** at DEQ is to safeguard public health and our quality of life by protecting and enhancing our environment. We do this by implementing state and federal environmental laws and by working with individuals, community groups, businesses and local, state and federal agencies.

By many measures, our environment is healthier today than it was in the 1970s. This is partly due to national environmental policy that has set the framework for stricter state laws to protect the **air, land** and **water**. It also is due to state officials working with local leaders who are committed to finding innovative ways to solve problems.

Although air pollution levels have declined in recent years, the ongoing challenge is to balance population and industrial growth with programs that ensure good air quality. The efforts of each of us – homeowners, vehicle users, industry and government – are essential. This cooperative, voluntary approach is exemplified through our **Choose Clean Air** campaign, where we provide residents with information about current air quality conditions and the actions they can take to curb air pollution.

DEQ employees work closely with city leaders, local residents and businesses to clean-up contamination that is often the result of unregulated practices that harmed the environment in decades past. Through the **Superfund, Brownfields** and **Utah's Voluntary Cleanup Programs**, thousands of acres of commercial and residential properties have been cleaned and put back into beneficial use.

As the second driest state in the nation, **water** is a precious resource. DEQ works to protect drinking water sources for Utah's 2.5 million residents and millions upon millions of visitors. We also oversee the quality of 14,250 miles of rivers and streams, and nearly 3,000 lakes and reservoirs that sustain a wide variety of wildlife, provide recreation and enjoyment, and support agricultural production.

Our ongoing **success** is due to dedicated employees who work in partnership with our various stakeholders. This report highlights some examples of our successes. DEQ intends to provide an update on an annual basis to illustrate our progress, successes and challenges. I hope you find this information valuable. I also invite you to learn more about DEQ and the issues we are following by visiting our Web site at www.deq.utah.gov.

Message from the Director



Photo: Brandon Smart, DEQ

Dianne R. Nielson, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Department of Environmental Quality